

ATLANTA BELVEDERE SDA CHURCH

Study  
Guide


The Epistle of Paul to the

# Philippians

Pastor's Bible Class • SATURDAYS • 3pm-4pm

with Dr. Samuel U. Bulgin

J O Y  
No Matter What

A hand is shown at the bottom, holding a dandelion seed head. The background is a soft, warm sunset or sunrise sky with a gradient from light yellow to orange and then a hint of blue at the top. The word 'JOY' is written in large, dark teal letters, with the dandelion seed head acting as the letter 'O'. Below it, the phrase 'No Matter What' is written in a smaller, dark teal font.

## INTRODUCTION

Philippians is a genuine authoritative Pauline epistle. It is Paul's most joyful letter. Paul was very strategic in his choice of places to preach. What was special about Philippi?

- It was a commercial center. It had gold and silver mines.
- It was founded by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. It was named in his honor. It was the crossroads between Europe and Africa.
- It was a Roman colony, with military significance. Roman language was spoken, Roman dress was worn; Roman customs were followed; Roman magistrates were given Roman titles. Roman pride permeated their thoughts. Paul wanted them to remember they were a colony of heaven. They were Christians.

## THEME

*Joy  
No  
Matter  
What.*

## PURPOSE

- To thank the Philippians for their gift (1:5, 4:10-11).
- To ensure a good reception for Epaphroditus as he returned home, having been sick (2:29-30).
- To encourage the Philippians during their time of trials (1:28-30).
- To inform the Philippians of Paul's situation and his prospects for the future (1:12-26; 2:24).
- To prepare the way for Timothy's coming (2:19-23).
- To appeal for unity (2:1-11).
  - Two women who endangered the peace (4:2).
  - False teachers seeking to lure them from the path of truth (3:2).

- To settle certain problems:
  - Persecution by unknown opponents, possibly Gentiles stirred up by Jews (1:28-30).
  - False teachings by Jews or Jewish-Christians (legalists or Gnostics) (3:2-19).
  - Dissension among members. (1:27; 2:2-3; 4:2-3).

## TEACHING

Philippians is a book about excellent things. It is permeated with joy. It is a book of religious feelings. It models how we ought to behave as Christians when we face the hard realities of life and death. "When the going is toughest, the footing is surest, the strength most abundant, and the joy most radiant."

Paul teaches us about:

### 1. Christian joy.

- a. Reason for joy. . .
  - i. Prayer (1:4).
  - ii. The preaching of Christ (1:18).
  - iii. His experiences honors Christ (1:19-20).
  - iv. His death might aid the Philippians (2:17).
  - v. The hope of the believers' steadfastness and unity (4:1; 2:2).
  - vi. The Philippians' gift (4:10).
  - vii. Joy for the Philippians in the progress of their faith (1:25).
  - viii. The possibility of his sacrificial death. (2:18)
  - ix. Their restored relationship with Epaphroditus (2:28-30).
  - x. That they were incorporated in Christ and the church (4:5).

xi. They can do all things through Christ (4:13).

**2. Self-denying concern for others.**

- a. Christ's self-denying concern for others. His exaltation by God (2:5-11) contrasted with some of the Philippians' selfish, grasping spirit who were clinging to personal privilege and glory (2:3; 4:2-3).
- b. Church members are to have the mind of Christ.
- c. Church members are to imitate Christ in radical self-renunciation.

**3. The path to the glory of the resurrection.**

- a. False teachers were about to lure them away.
- b. The path is marked by:
  - i. Renunciation of merit – all human assets from heredity, personal choice, and accomplishment (3:4-8).
  - ii. Identification with Christ through faith – sharing in his suffering, His death, and the power of His resurrection (3:9-11).
  - iii. Relentless pursuit of reaching the goal of eternal life (3:12-16).
  - iv. Imitation of Christian leaders who have set their minds on heavenly, rather than earthly realities. (3:17-21).

## OUTLINE

**I. Greetings (1:1-2)**

- a. Paul is a slave of Jesus Christ.
- b. He is the absolute possession of Christ.
- c. He owes absolute obedience to Christ.
- d. He identifies with Old Testament prophets such as Moses, Joshua, David. (Joshua 1:2; Judges 2:8; Psalm 78:70; 89:3, 20).

- e. His readers are saints in Christ Jesus.
  - i. *“In Christ Jesus”* occurs 48 times; *“In Christ”* occurs 34 times, and *“In the Lord”* occurs 50 times.
- f. *“Grace and Peace”* – all-inclusive greeting.

## **II. The Marks of the Christian Life (1:3-11)**

- a. The Christian joy.
  - i. The joy of Christian prayer (1:4).
  - ii. The joy that Jesus Christ is preached (1:18).
  - iii. The joy of faith (1:25).
  - iv. The joy of seeing Christians in fellowship (2:2).
  - v. The joy of suffering for Christ (2:17).
  - vi. The joy of news of loved ones (2:28).
  - vii. The joy of Christian hospitality (2:29).
  - viii. The joy of the man in Christ (3:1; 4:1).
  - ix. The joy of the man who has won a soul for Christ (4:1).
  - x. The joy in a gift (4:10).
- b. The Christian sacrifice (1:6).
- c. The Christian partnership.
  - i. Partners in Grace.
  - ii. Partners in the work of the gospel.
  - iii. Partners with Christ.
- d. Christian progress and goal.

## **III. The Progress of the Gospel Through the Events and Circumstances of Paul’s Life (1:12-26)**

- a. Barriers broken (1:12-14).
- b. Impartial proclamation (1:15-18).
- c. A happy ending (1:19-20).
- d. In life and in death (1:21-26).

## **IV. Advancing the Gospel Within the Church (1:27-4:9)**

- a. Citizens of the kingdom (1:27-30).
- b. Causes of disunity (2:1-4).
  - i. Selfish ambition.
  - ii. Personal prestige.
  - iii. Concentration on self.
- c. Cure of disunity.
  - i. Being in Christ.
  - ii. Christian love.
  - iii. Holy Spirit helps us to live a life of love.
  - iv. Human compassion.
  - v. Paul's personal appeal.
- d. The example of Christ (2:5-11).
  - i. Being in the form of God.
  - ii. Equal with God.
  - iii. He emptied Himself.
  - iv. He was found in fashion as a man.
  - v. He was exalted (1 Cor. 15:28).
- e. Cooperation in salvation (2:12-18).
  - i. Salvation is of God. It is God's work; it is continuous; it ends with God.
  - ii. We are to work out our salvation.
    - 1. Effective action.
    - 2. Fear and trembling.
    - 3. Peace and certainty.
    - 4. Purity—blameless; innocent—without blemish; proclamation.
  - iii. Paul desires joy for not working in vain.

**V. Accepting the Help of Deeply Committed Christian Leaders (2:19-30)**

**VI. Pressing on in the Three Ways of Salvation (3:1-21)**

- a. Indestructible joy (3:1).
- b. False teachers (3:2-3).

- c. Paul's privileges (3:4-7).
- d. Worthlessness of law and value of Christ (3:8-9).
- e. To know Christ (3:10-11).
- f. Pressing on (3:12-16).
- g. Earth dwellers but citizens of heaven (3:17-21).

**VII. By Mutual Helpfulness, Prayer, Trust in God, Concentrating on What is Good, and Imitating Paul (4:1-9)**

- a. Great things in the Lord (4:1).
- b. Healing broken relationships (4:2-3).
- c. Mark of the Christian life (4:4-5).
  - i. Joy – moderation – gentleness.
- d. Prayer – in everything, supplication – thanksgiving – peace (4:6-7).
- e. True teaching and true God (4:8-9).
  - i. The God of peace.
  - ii. The God of hope.
  - iii. The God of patience, comfort, consolation.

**VIII. The Philippians' Gift (4:10-20)**

- a. True contentment (4:10-13).
  - i. Eliminate all desire.
  - ii. Eliminate all emotion.
  - iii. By a deliberate act of will:
    - 1. The stoic was self-sufficient.
    - 2. Paul was God-sufficient.
  - iv. The value of the gift (4:14-20)

**IX. Conclusion (4:21-23)**

